

# HOW IT HAPPENED

*by*

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MERION, PA.



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DURING the past thirty years it has been my good fortune to be able to devote practically all of my time, money and efforts to research work in the field of experimental education. Still more fortunate was I in having the active daily collaboration of a half dozen associates whose zeal in the endeavor equalled my own. One of these collaborators has expressed our common experience in the words "we have found it an adventure, as much fun as playing a game, and enjoyable for the same reason."

Twenty years ago, our previous work was formalized by obtaining a charter as an educational institution under the laws of Pennsylvania. The students enrolled in our classes have come from all parts of the world, have comprised all strata of society from college professors to truck drivers, all races and all shades of political and religious beliefs. Tuition has always been free and we have never received a dollar from any source other than our own endowment fund.

The record of our past twenty years' work is embodied in nine books produced by members of our staff. Much has

been written about this work by specialists, but we cherish most the following statement excerpted from a volume by the world's leading authority on education:

“Whatever is sound in this volume is due more than I can say to the great educational work carried on in the Barnes Foundation. That work is of a pioneer quality comparable to the best that has been done in any field during the present generation, that of science not excepted. I should be glad to think of this volume as one phase of the widespread influence the Foundation is exercising.”

Much also has been written about us in newspapers and magazines that deals with topics of interest to the general reader. Almost without exception these articles were the outcome of the disturbing impact of our work upon institutions and individuals that have not kept pace with the educational and cultural progress of our age. Pioneers have always encountered this obstruction and have had to fight against it in order to survive. Our methods of fighting it, often strenuous and not always free from the use of invective, have brought many inquirers to our doors, sometimes reporters looking for sensational bits of news, at other times gifted, honest writers pleading for a first-hand, human-interest account of our work.

Our uniform practice has been to refuse all such appeals; we have preferred to let what we are doing speak for itself to those qualified to understand the basic principles involved. That speaking is done best by our books and by our former and present students.

However, since we had utilized so many other existing social factors as experimental material for educational purposes, it was decided to see what could be done with one or more of the many writers who were constantly knocking at our door for a story about our work.

At about this period, Mr. Carl W. McCardle, a Philadel-

phia newspaper reporter, asked for first-hand data on a story concerning our work which had appeared in a local paper. He called on numerous other occasions for similar news and after several months' acquaintance he told me he would like to write a magazine article concerning the activities of the Foundation and myself. He well knew that what he asked for had been refused to practically every important magazine in America and to writers internationally known for their ability and honesty.

The first step in utilizing McCardle as material for the contemplated experiment in scientific method was to inform him that the primary requisite of any writer undertaking such a job was to read certain books that would enable him to get the background needed to approach the subject intelligently. I loaned him these books and told him that he should concentrate upon what constitute the essentials of scientific method, the method that has governed the activities of my career.

The following account of my experience with McCardle from the time I loaned him the books until the present day, is taken from a record of documents which have been confirmed by lawyers as good legal evidence and which can be produced at any time.

McCardle was given access to my personal files only *after he had agreed* that any article written by him about my affairs would be subject to the terms and conditions—specifically stated to him in writing—that obligated him to submit his copy for approval before it was offered for publication in any magazine.

The record shows that during the several months McCardle was engaged in writing the article I protested repeatedly that in the copy which he had thus far read to me, the distortion and falsification of facts, the overemphasis of sensational elements of events at the expense of their true meanings, and the whole spirit of his treatment of the subject, was a flagrant violation of the agreement according to which



I granted him the privilege of writing the article and gave him access to my files.

McCardle ignored all of these protests, as well as my many requests to be furnished a copy of what he had written. He apparently did not know that scientific method provides for taking care of all such "funny business." He knows now.

The record shows that early in February, McCardle was notified that unless he gave me a copy of what he had written, my attorneys would take appropriate action. On February 10th, he handed me a set of four articles in galley proof which he had obtained from the editor of the Saturday Evening Post and which, he said, he had promised to return to the editor that same afternoon. He told me that he had sold the article and had not told the editor of his agreement with me concerning approval before submitting the article for publication.

The value of the galleys as evidence was so obvious that I refused to return them to McCardle. Instead, I had photostatic copies made of them after I had pasted on their first sheet a label reading:

"Every one of the twenty-eight (28) sheets of these galleys contains statements which are false and misleading and some of which I saw for the first time in this copy."

In the type of these galleys I saw for the first time matter which the agreement obligated McCardle to submit for approval before any editor had a right to even consider it for publication.

What to do under the circumstances was a puzzle to the lawyers because, if the editor did not know of the conditions that governed publication of the article, it would be futile to petition the Courts for an injunction against the Saturday Evening Post. There was evidence that the editor knew of my vested rights in the manuscript, but attorneys are familiar

with legal tactics that might be manipulated to favor the editor's plea of ignorance of the agreement.

The plan decided upon was to make the best of a bad situation and try to give the articles at least a semblance of accurate factual content. Four colleagues and myself found this a difficult job because it was impossible either to reconcile the author's romantic versions of people and events with the facts as we know them, or to make his series of articles come within the terms of the agreement concerning their content and character. All we could do was remove the most glaring of the falsifications, distortions and fabrications, and let the rest of his imaginative ramblings go. Our revisions of the copy were apparently satisfactory to the editor of the Saturday Evening Post, for he wrote, "We are grateful to you, however, for making corrections on the four galleys and almost every one is being enforced." Nevertheless, even if he publishes the copy as we corrected it, the articles will not come within hailing distance of what the author obligated himself to do.

From this point on, the documents of the record dig deeply into the ethics of the situation and the judgments thereon have been rendered in language of unmistakable meaning. My attorneys had informed the editor that the articles which he had purchased from McCardle were written under an agreement which restricted the author in offering them for sale. The evidence of the existence of this agreement and the offer to submit it to the editor for verification, were ignored. My contention is that under the circumstances the author had no moral right to sell the articles, and that the Saturday Evening Post had no moral right to publish them after its editor had been informed of those circumstances.

After the editor's highhanded rejection of valid legal and moral claims, I proposed to him that a wager of money be made on the ethics of the situation, that a body of specialists review the evidence, that the decision thus arrived at be

final, and that the total amount of money wagered be donated to the Red Cross. The editor ignored this offer and thus deprived that worthy organization of a substantial, sorely-needed, sum of money.

However, the matter was passed upon by specialists, and their findings are part of the record of the case as a whole. Some of the most penetrating, picturesque and illuminating of these findings were given to the editor of the Saturday Evening Post, and some to the author of the articles. The editor's reply to these authoritative judgments was "Tut, tut!"; the author didn't respond with even one "tut."

McCardle's articles are written in a breezy, swiftly-moving style that entertains and amuses the reader. The model is borrowed from Horatio Alger and adorned with the full and skilfully used bag of tricks of slick newspaper reporting. Its style is not original with the author but is rather an eclectic mixture of characteristics of several well-known writers for popular magazines.

What bothers many persons who have read the photostatic copies of all four articles is their inability to reconcile the title, plagiarized from another magazine, with the substantial meaning of the text of the articles. The editor's reason for not bothering with that detail resembles a frank confession of deliberate deception, for he wrote me:

"We would expect you to read it (the title) with good humor and recognize it for what it is—a good, apt attention getter to arouse the interest of our public and get them to read an article which otherwise they might be scared of, thinking it too weighty and 'arty'."

In other words, the editor of the Saturday Evening Post says to his public, "Come on, Suckers, buy the lemon I sell as an orange."

Whether or not the articles portray what my activities have meant in social, educational and cultural values, is for others to judge. It seems to me, however, that I emerge



from McCardle's articles too much like a warrior-hero with boots licked too clean. To an informed psychologist, this indicates that what the author has subconsciously produced is a phantasy-portrait of himself as he would like to be and would like others to think he is. The psychology of behavior of this sort is familiar to all students of the writings of William James, Bernard Hart, Freud and Havelock Ellis. It is wishful-thinking *autobiography*, not objective biography.

Many of the incidents and events, and most of the quotations ascribed to me in McCardle's articles, I learned of for the first time in the galley proofs; indeed, some of the tales and nearly all of the supposedly verbatim reports of my sayings, are really whoppers. McCardle's story shows that any sort of event is sufficient to stir his imagination to convert that event into a sensational cock-and-bull story. If the event is non-existent, he invents one and quotes a flip remark which he ascribes to me. If a wisecrack occurs to him, his imagination runs riot and creates an illustrative event and, presto, I am the central figure. His article is replete with samples of both of these brands of fiction. The psychology of these gymnastics of the imagination is explained authoritatively in the first chapter of Santayana's volume "*Studies in Poetry and Religion*." It is the psychology of fairy tales.

To sum up, McCardle constructed an elaborate series of fairy tales out of the record of my thirty years' efforts to advance the educational and cultural interests of America. The Saturday Evening Post bought these fairy tales for a large sum of money and broadcast them to millions of people after the editor of that magazine had been informed that the author had no moral right to sell them and the magazine had no moral right to publish them.

The editor ignored, spurned, our offers to let him examine the evidence, in proper legal form, when it was offered to him.

The story, based upon verifiable records, is herewith published so that the court of informed public opinion may arrive at its own judgment upon the moral questions involved.

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